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The

Hunterdon County

Historical Society.



HISTORY  
OF THE  
HUNTERDON COUNTY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY,

By Elias Vosseller.

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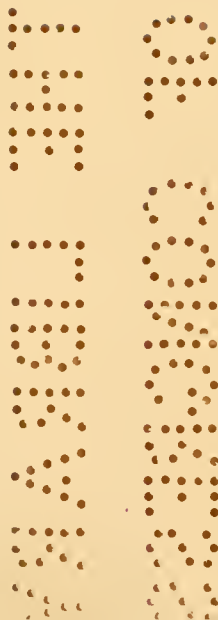
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THE Hunterdon County Historical Society was organized September 11th, 1885, by Doctors Henry Race, Geo. H. Larison, N. B. Boileau, Geo. N. Best and Rev. Dr. Geo. S. Mott, Rev. C. S. Conkling and William T. Srope, E. M. Heath, John W. Lequear, Jacob Servis, Richard H. Wilson, Walter F. Hayhurst, Jos. C. Exton, E. T. Bush, Asher W. Carroll and Elias Vosseller.

Doctors G. H. Larison, Henry Race and Rev. C. S. Conkling were appointed a committee to draft a Constitution and By-Laws. In the Constitution the object of the Society is declared to be "to discover, procure and preserve whatever relates to any department

of the History of Hunterdon County, natural, civil, genealogical, literary or ecclesiastical : and generally of other parts of the State."

"It shall also act in auxiliary relations with the New Jersey Historical Society according to the plan adopted by that Society."

Doctor George H. Larison was elected its first President. The yearly business meeting is held on the third Saturday of October, in the chapel of the Presbyterian church of Flemington, at which time officers are elected for the coming year, reports of the officers made, the more important items that have been added to our Collections during the year, exhibited, one or more papers of historical value read, and plans for the good of the Society discussed.

During the summer at such time and place as the Executive Committee may select, a more general meeting is held, and often largely attended. Such meetings have been held in the M. E. Church, of Frenchtown, in the grove of W. F. Holcombe, at Mt. Airy, in connection with the Holcombe Re-union,

terization of a would-be Reformer.

“ Day by day he gave the Almighty advice,  
Which he deemed of great worth,  
And his wife took in sewing,  
To keep things going,  
While he superintended the earth.”

From Miss Kate Taylor, “Shuster’s Hollow School and its Teachers.”

From Dr. Hayhurst “A Memorial of Jacob Servis,” one of our most enthusiastic members. From our Corresponding Secretary, Mr. Elias Vosseller, “A Sketch of the Copper Mining Enterprises near Flemington.” This also was published in pamphlet form by Mr. H. E. Deats.

From Mrs. Mary C. Vail “A Historical Sketch of the Friends Meeting at Quakertown.” From Walter F. Hayhurst an appreciative Sketch of the Life of George H. Larison, M. D., our first President, whose death was greatly deplored.

One of our members discovered that Rev. John Atkinson, the founder of the M. E. Church of Flemington was living in Benton Harbor, Mich. Through his daughter, Mrs.

Sarah Winans, a considerable correspondence was carried on with him and many interesting items relating to the early history of Flemington and such families as the Alexanders, Flemings, Lowreys and Atkinsons were secured. He died in the spring of 1891 of La Grippe in his ninety-fourth year.

Our Society sent the following Communication to the Legislature of Pennsylvania, which explains itself.

The members of the Hunterdon County (New Jersey) Historical Society desire to call your attention to the Bill now pending before your legislature relating to the purchase by your state of Valley Forge. We hope you will pass this, or a similar Bill, so that this historic spot, dedicated to the spirit of Liberty, may be preserved. We are of opinion that Valley Forge stands for a crisis in our Country's history of no less magnitude than Gettysburg. At Gettysburg amid the roar and flame of battle, our brave troops showed that our country was able to conquer the Military power of the Rebellion. At



in the Baptist Church at Baptisttown, at Deer Park, Penn. in connection with the Buck's county Historical Society, in the room of the W. C. T. U. in Clinton, in the Baptist Church of Sandy Ridge, in the home of Jacob Servis, in Lambertville, in the Presbyterian Church of Milford and in the Hall at Pittstown.

The first paper read before the Society was by George N. Best, M. D., on the "Duties of the Historian." Other papers of importance have been prepared and read by the following members ;—By Henry Race, M. D., on "Jane Mc Crea," who at one time lived in Hunterdon County, and who was brutally murdered near Fort Edward, N. Y., in 1777. This paper was afterward read before the New Jersey Historical Society and incorporated by them in their "Proceedings." He also prepared and read a "Historical and Genealogical Account of Col. Thomas Lowrey and Esther Fleming, his wife," and showed their photographs. This article has been published in pamphlet form, by Mr. H. F. Deats,

of Flemington, including the pictures, and has been of great interest to the numerous branches of those families. Also "A Historical Sketch of the Rockhill Family," and other shorter papers.

From Geo. H. Larison, M. D., we have had "A Genealogical History of the Holcombe Family," "The dead in Barber's Burying Ground," "The mode of life in our Early Settlements," "Elnathan Stevenson Family," including the "Sharps" and the "Fields," "A History of the Sandy Ridge Baptist Church," "A Sketch of the Life of Dr. Gershom Craven," who practiced medicine in Ringoes and vicinity from 1771 to 1819.

From our Recording Secretary, Mr. John W. Lequear we have had "The Early Settlement and History of the Baptists in Hunterdon County," "History and Settlement of the Rittenhouse Family in Hunterdon County," "History of the branch of the Ingham Family in Hunterdon County," "The Culture of Flax, and making of Flax seed

Oil ; their labor and importance in the early wealth of Hunterdon County," with samples of home-spun and home-made linen, gingham, and calico. Also, "Biography of Robert Rittenhouse," "Some Recollections of Lambertville over fifty years ago," "The Rodman Tract" once owned by Col. Thos. Lowrey, 'The "Rio Grande Mills," "Reminiscences of the Border between Kingwood and Delaware Townships," and "Recollections of Pittstown General Training of Militia."

From Mr. Stacy B. Bray, we have had an important paper on "The Life and Times of General Robert Hunter," the Colonial Governor after whom Hunterdon County was named, showing an oil painting on wood of his Excellency. Also "Some accounts of General Daniel Bray's Efforts in procuring the Boats for Washington's Crossing the Delaware" bringing to our minds an important act in our National History, of which every Jerseyman is proud, as it was the turning point of the Revolution.

From Rev. George S. Mott, D. D., we have had "The old churches, more particularly the Presbyterian Churches of Hunterdon County."

From Mr. Jacob Servis, "The Early Marriages in old Amwell Township from Official Records of Rev. William Frazer from 1769 to 1793." Also an account of a "Visit to the Mc Neely Farm and Grave Yard, near New Hope." Here a number of Revolutionary soldiers were buried.

From Mr. W. T. Srope, "Baptisttown and Kingwood History," "The Sheriffs of Hunterdon County," and obituaries of Hugh E. Warford and Rev. C. S. Conkling, deceased members of our society.

From Rev. W. W. Bullock, "The Foundations on which our Fathers Built" and "The Rittenhouse Manual Labor School." This school was established by Robt. Rittenhouse in 1830 near Locktown. It was not a financial success and Mrs. Rittenhouse soon complained that all the *manual labor* came on her. It reminds one of this clever charac-

Valley Forge our forefathers by heroic endurance, amid manifold discouragements, even the elements of nature seeming to augment and protract their misery, proved their ability to maintain their war for Independence.

We cherish their memory. We would honor them by preserving, as nearly intact as possible, this spot the very mention of which recalls such worthy deeds."

The Bill passed both Houses and was signed by Governor Pattison on last Memorial Day, an act appropriate to the day and the day worthy of the deed.

The Columbian Liberty Bell Committee appealed to Historical Societies and Museums for filings from objects of Historical value, especially those that had any bearing on the struggle for Freedom, to be cast in the Bell. Our Society responded as below :  
"On the 14th of December, 1776, Cornet Francis Geary with about twenty picked men of the 16th Regiment Queen's Light Dragoons, the pet Cavalry Regiment of the British Army, led a raid from Trenton, New

Jersey, on the village of Flemington, Hunterdon County, New Jersey.

“ By a clever ruse on the part of Col. Thomas Lowrey he was frightened out of the village without doing much harm.

“ On his retreat he was ambushed by Capt. John Schenck, home on a furlough from the Patriot Army, who hastily collected a half dozen farmers for that purpose. In the skirmish Geary was killed and was buried near the spot where he fell.

“ A committee of the Hunterdon County Historical Society opened his grave in May, 1891, and took from it the silver buttons from which these filings were taken.”

Our Society has stirred up a new interest in local history and in genealogical research and we receive many inquiries relating to families that were prominent in the early history of the County. In some cases we are able to furnish the information desired, in others, are able to suggest probable sources of information.

We are making a Collection of Books,

Pamphlets, Newspapers, old Deeds &c relating especially to Hunterdon County. We invite all to co-operate with us in this. We have even undertaken to collect complete files of all the newspapers ever published in our County. Stray numbers of any of these that precede 1880 will be welcomed by our Librarian Mr. H. E. Deats. We have the nucleus of a very interesting Historical Collection which some day will be an honor to our County, and of sufficient interest to attract the attention of visitors.

At present we have fifty-four Resident members, and eleven Corresponding and Honorary Members.

ELIAS VOSSELLER,  
Corresponding Sec'y.

L. of C.

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H. E. DEATS,

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